From:	Peter Ellis
To:	McGovern, Marc; Devereux, Jan; Carlone, Dennis; Kelley, Craig; Mallon, Alanna; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Simmons, Denise; Toomey, Tim; qzonderman@cambridgema.gov
Subject:	Pending "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions" resolution
Date:	Sunday, April 22, 2018 1:42:10 PM

Dear City Council members,

I recently received in the mail a flyer from an organization calling itself the "Israeli-American Coalition for Action," which called on the City Council to reject a proposed resolution that would attempt to influence Israeli government policy by adopting a policy of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS).
The flyer alleges, *inter alia*, that the BDS resolution "calls into question Israel's very right to exist as a nation, . . . [and] is deeply rooted in anti-Semitism." To anyone familiar, as I am, with the long, complex and tragic history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this is utter, inflammatory nonsense.

I first became familiar with that conflict in 1954, when I spent weeks studying its still-early history to prepare for a model United Nations Program. I continued to study that history as a college student, as a law student, and as a Ph.D. grad student (all at Harvard), and have followed developments in the area for more than six decades. No one can pretend that either side is without fault, or that it has an indisputable claim to the moral high ground. But it is clear to any objective observer that the policies of Israeli leadership from the 1940's to the present, with only rare exceptions, have resulted in consistent victimization of the Palestinian population both inside and outside Israel itself, second-class citizenship for those Palestinians who live within its borders, and repeated violations of U.N. Security Council resolutions. These views are shared not only by a clear majority of Western scholars, but by a number of Israeli historians and a meaningful sector of the Israeli population itself.

I am not associated in any way with the BDS movement, but have enough familiarity with it to assert that, while highly critical of Israeli government policies and practices, the movement does not call into question Israel's right to exist. Nor is it "rooted in anti-Semitism" -- a label that uncritical supporters of the Israeli government unfairly apply to anyone who dares criticize its policies. (American or Israeli Jews who share those critical views are referred to as "self-hating Jews.")

Adoption by the Council of the BDS resolution is unlikely by itself to have significant practical effects. But if similar resolutions are adopted by enough public entities, educational institutions, and private corporations, Israeli leaders may begin to see that knee-jerk defensiveness and inflexibility are not the best way forward.

Sincerely yours,
Peter B. Ellis
16 Highland Street
(a resident of Cambridge since 1957)